

# A FEW PLAIN WORDS,

INTENDED TO CONVEY A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING  
RELATIVE TO THE MEANING OF THE

## CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS,

PERTAINING TO FEMALES,

AND DEDICATED TO

THE WOMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN,

By JOHN HENRY JOHNSTON.

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## A FEW PLAIN WORDS.



“TO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE.”

THE term “Contagious Diseases Acts,” very few are aware, means “Venereal Disease,” the natural consequence of improper intimacy between man and woman. The Act bearing that name is intended by its inventors and promoters to prevent the spread of a disease of so horrible a nature as to disgrace and destroy both soul and body. An Act framed for such a purpose, if based upon equity and justice would merit the support of every pure and virtuous person within these realms.

Woman was formed to be a helpmeet to man, and as such, stands his co-equal, and laws framed by man for their benefit ought to be mutual. This act, on the contrary, is all one-sided, and tends to debase woman below the beasts. Truly, man is very depraved and wicked, or such a gross injustice would never have been entertained.

The Act says, “Be it enacted by the Queen’s most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same.”

I am curious to know if Her Majesty, our Most Gracious and Beloved Queen, ever read, or caused to be read in her presence, and put her seal to such a cruel enactment. Her *womanhood* and her *true nobility* make me believe it impossible.

The fifteenth and other sections of the Act give the Police power to believe, to swear on oath, that such and such a woman is a prostitute, and as such is liable to imprisonment, if she does not appear and submit to be examined to see if she is fit, by freedom from disease, to carry on her loathsome trade with safety.

Section twenty-four provides that she may be detained in an hospital from three to six months, until properly cured. Section twenty-eight punishes with imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for the first offence, one month, the second offence, three months, any woman subjected by order of a Justice to periodical examination, if at any time she temporarily absents herself to avoid submitting herself to examination.

Section twenty-nine ignores her punishment for the offence of neglect, and still holds her liable to section twenty-eight, if she has not submitted while in prison, or the medical officer certifies in writing that she is clean.

Section thirty, "If any woman is convicted and imprisoned for the offence of quitting an hospital, or of refusing or neglecting, while in an hospital, to conform to the above requirements, she shall on the expiration of her term of imprisonment, be sent back to the hospital, and be detained there until the medical officer considers her fit to be liberated.

Section thirty-one says, "If any woman leave an hospital uncured, and be found in any place for the purpose of prostitution, she shall be guilty of an offence against the Act, and become liable to imprisonment for one or three months, with or without hard labour.

Section thirty-three, "Any woman not under detention in an hospital, but subject to a periodical examina-



tion, desirous to be relieved from examination, must make application in writing to a Justice, who shall appoint a time and place for the hearing of her application, and cause a copy to be sent to the Police."

Section thirty-four, "She must find securities for her good behaviour, if the Justice think proper."

Section thirty-five, "If she is seen in any public place or street for the purpose of prostitution, her liberty is forfeited."

Section forty, "Any person in Her Majesty's Service, or in that of the Admiralty, shall, on production of any notice, order, &c., be received in evidence."

Section four of an Act to amend, &c., permits a Justice, on receiving information from the Police, to issue a notice to be served on her by the Police, if she is seen in the company of men for the purpose of prostitution.

Section five provides that any order subjecting a woman to a periodical examination shall be in operation and force as long as any such woman resides within ten miles of the place where the order was made.

Section six allows woman to write voluntarily for examination, and if she fails to appear, she becomes liable to all the penalties of the Act, namely, without further notice be subject to a periodical medical examination, &c.

Woman, what do you think of the above extracts which I have tried to render as plain and correct as possible. (For the sake of brevity, various names, such as, Superintendent, Inspector, Chief Medical Officer, Physician or Surgeon for the time, &c., the repetition of which, not being considered necessary, are here omitted.)

Do you see anything in the Act to *destroy* the sin? No! It is how man may best *commit* the sin with

*safety*, and wallow in his filthiness, that is aimed at. Woman, the victim of his cruel lust, is imprisoned, it may be, with hard labour, for *daring* to *hide* a *natural consequence*.

It is said the Bill was smuggled through Parliament at the end of the session along with another Bill bearing the same name, but referring to cattle; that a large majority of Honourable Members (I trust all) were absent, and, like the country at large, were ignorant of its contents. Such being the case, I presume the good men in St. Stephen's will hasten to remedy the mistake, and if they do not succeed in completely destroying the obnoxious paper, they will succeed in getting the word *man* inserted along with, or instead of, *woman*. Licitious, vicious, cruel men, you need not stare at this suggestion. *You alone* are the *prime* cause of the disease, and for *you* the Acts are most suitable. Those ignorant of the world and its ways will be surprised to learn that there is a *clergyman* (I trust not *men*,) warning women against joining a society engaged on the repeal of their destruction, namely, the "Contagious Diseases Act." I am sorry to say it, there are hypocritical clergymen, generally the most cruel of the race.

Woman! you have now a good test of man's sincerity. Yes or no, for or against, will denote virtue or vice; it is impossible for a good man to favour the Acts as they now stand.

I do not pretend to despise the police,—there are exceptions among them who have done, and are doing their duty manfully, nobly, and effectively; but with the power given them by these Acts, they would require the virtue of Pope's infallibility. Is this the case with many of their number? are there not some who value

their oath at almost nothing? will any give evidence for a trifle? Ask the publican how he manages. Are the police as a class beloved? Why alienate them more from our regards? We must have suitable protectors, so long as there are thieves and robbers. We may respect them,—at times their conduct is worthy of all praise,—impose on them the requirements of these acts, and they will be in danger of execration. Is this fair? Fancy their position. It is not impossible, it is highly probable, that a man in his baffled rage, whose assaults his intended victim has withstood, may turn round and say, “Policeman, take this woman, she is a prostitute, she is unclean; away with her!” This is no imaginary picture; the innocent have already suffered. There are some who grow eloquent over the evils inflicted on the innocent wife and children, and would enforce the Act to protect them, when the husband, her natural protector, it may be, is assisting the policeman to fill our prisons and hospitals with his helpless victims. Does the Act protect her? No! It is the propagator of the evil that is protected. Is this fair? None but the most debased can say, Yes.

I feel ashamed of my sex, that they should spoil and ruin, and afterwards imprison their victims for a *natural consequence*. Has any class of men a right to use such a remedy that they may luxuriate in their sin, and trample over their victim with impunity. The idea is monstrous! It is impossible for a Christian to entertain such an idea. Woman! where are thine accusers? “Go and sin no more!” was once spoken in a like cause by One who said, “He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.” Woman is abnegating, confiding, and forgiving. She shrinks from contact, where man would



wallow. She ranks far higher than man in her natural aversion to everything impure. The most hardened voluptuary endorse her simplicity when he exults over his conquests. Women are advised by some not to meddle in this matter. This advice is in keeping with man's depravity. Deceitful ! hypocritical ! selfish man ! You know that woman, though weak, is powerful enough to make you hide your shameless, guilty heads. The time for her to do so is at hand, and I appeal to you, fathers, husbands, brothers, to help her. Be true to her ! Love and respect her, as the good Old Book directs, and you will soon wonder how *man*, even the most depraved could approve of such a Bill.

The Devil is at work here, for no sin so hardens the heart or stupifies the conscience as adultery and fornication. The curse of the Creator is stamped upon it. Nature shows her abhorrence of it in the production of a loathsome disease. Man, the active propogator, writhes under it, and curses the effect, forgetting the cause is in himself. *This* not a subject for woman ! Away with such a thought ! It deeply concerns her. Away with sham and silly sentiment ! The world is surcharged with it. Be men ! Be women ! Be true to your higher vocation ! Live for the pleasures of your higher destiny ! Be true to your Maker ; study His precepts ; ask His aid in every difficulty, in the struggle with sin. Do it honestly, anxiously, and frequently, and, as sure as you are immortal, you will not be disappointed.